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Old World Series



BALLADES IN BLUE CHINA

&

OTHER POEMS



TO THE READER

*Laughter and song the poet brings,
And lends them form and gives them wings ;
Then sets his chirping squadron free
To post at will by land or sea,
And find their home, if that may be.*

*Laughter and song this poet, too,
O Western brothers, sends to you :
With doubtful flight the darting train
Have crossed the bleak Atlantic main, —
Now warm them in your hearts again !*

AUSTIN DOBSON.

1884.

BALLADES IN BLUE CHINA
AND OTHER POEMS BY
ANDREW LANG



Portland, Maine
THOMAS B. MOSHER
Mdcccviij

AND OTHER ESSAYS BY
A. G. W. W. W. W. W.

*This First Edition on
Van Gelder paper con-
sists of 925 copies.*



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BALLADES IN BLUE CHINA



“ *Rondeaux, BALLADES,
Chansons, dizains, propos menus,
Compte moy qu’ilz sont devenuз :
Se faict il plus rien de nouveau ?* ”

CLEMENT MAROT, *Dialogue de deux
Amoureux.*

“ I love a ballad but even too well ; if it be doleful
matter, merrily set down, or a very pleasant thing
indeed, and sung lamentably.”

A Winter's Tale, Act iv. sc. 3.

A BALLADE OF XXII BALLADES

FRIEND, when you bear a care-dulled eye,
And brow perplexed with things of weight,
And fain would bid some charm untie
The bonds that hold you all too strait,
Behold a solace to your fate,
Wrapped in this cover's china blue;
These ballades fresh and delicate,
This dainty troop of twenty-two!

The mind, unwearied, longs to fly
And commune with the wise and great;
But that same ether, rare and high,
Which glorifies its worthy mate,
To breath forspent is disparate:
Laughing and light and airy-new
These come to tickle the dull pate,
This dainty troop of twenty-two.

Most welcome then, when you and I,
Forestalling days for mirth too late,
To quips and cranks and fantasy
Some choice half-hour dedicate,
They weave their dance with measured rate
Of rhymes enlinked in order due,

*Till frowns relax and cares abate,
This dainty troop of twenty-two.*

ENVOY

*Princes, of toys that please your state
Quainter are surely none to view
Than these which pass with tripping gait,
This dainty troop of twenty-two.*

FREDERICK POLLOCK.

BALLADE DEDICATORY

TO

MRS. ELTON

OF WHITE STAUNTON

THE painted Briton built his mound,
And left his celts and clay,
On yon fair slope of sunlit ground
That fronts your garden gay;
The Roman came, he bore the sway,
He bullied, bought, and sold,
Your fountain sweeps his works away
Beside your manor old!

But still his crumbling urns are found
Within the window-bay,
Where once he listened to the sound
That lulls you day by day; —
The sound of summer winds at play,
The noise of waters cold
To Yarty wandering on their way,
Beside your manor old!

The Roman fell: his firm-set bound
Became the Saxon's stay;
The bells made music all around
For monks in cloisters grey,
Till fled the monks in disarray
From their warm chantry's fold,

Old Abbots slumber as they may,
Beside your manor old!

ENVOY

Creeds, empires, peoples, all decay,
Down into darkness, rolled;
May life that's fleet be sweet, I pray,
Beside your manor old.

BALLADE OF BLUE CHINA

THERE'S a joy without canker or cark,
There's a pleasure eternally new,
'Tis to gloat on the glaze and the mark
Of china that's ancient and blue;
Unchipp'd all the centuries through
It has pass'd, since the chime of it rang,
And they fashion'd it, figure and hue,
In the reign of the Emperor Hwang.

These dragons (their tails, you remark,
Into bunches of gillyflowers grew), —
When Noah came out of the ark,
Did these lie in wait for his crew ?
They snorted, they snapp'd, and they slew;
They were mighty of fin and of fang,
And their portraits Celestials drew
In the reign of the Emperor Hwang.

Here's a pot with a cot in a park,
In a park where the peach-blossoms blew,
Where the lovers eloped in the dark,
Lived, died, and were changed into two
Bright birds that eternally flew
Through the boughs of the may, as they sang;
'Tis a tale was undoubtedly true
In the reign of the Emperor Hwang.

ENVOY

Come, snarl at my ecstasies, do,
Kind critic, your "tongue has a tang"
But—a sage never heeded a shrew
In the reign of the Emperor Hwang.

BALLADE TO THEOCRITUS, IN WINTER

ἔσορῶν τὰν Σικελὰν ἐς ἄλα.

Id. viii. 56.

AH! leave the smoke, the wealth, the roar
Of London, and the bustling street,
For still, by the Sicilian shore,
The murmur of the Muse is sweet.
Still, still, the suns of summer greet
The mountain-grave of Helikê,
And shepherds still their songs repeat
Where breaks the blue Sicilian sea.

What though they worship Pan no more,
That guarded once the shepherd's seat,
They chatter of their rustic lore,
They watch the wind among the wheat :
Cicalas chirp, the young lambs bleat,
Where whispers pine to cypress tree ;
They count the waves that idly beat
Where breaks the blue Sicilian sea.

Theocritus! thou canst restore
The pleasant years, and over-fleet ;
With thee we live as men of yore,
We rest where running waters meet :
And then we turn unwilling feet
And seek the world — so must it be —
We may not linger in the heat
Where breaks the blue Sicilian sea !

Master, — when rain, and snow, and sleet
 And northern winds are wild, to thee
 We come, we rest in thy retreat,
 Where breaks the blue Sicilian sea!

BALLADE OF CLEOPATRA'S NEEDLE

YE giant shades of RA and TUM,
Ye ghosts of gods Egyptian,
If murmurs of our planet come
To exiles in the precincts wan
Where, fetish or Olympian,
To help or harm no more ye list,
Look down, if look ye may, and scan
This monument in London mist!

Behold, the hieroglyphs are dumb
That once were read of him that ran
When seistron, cymbal, trump, and drum
Wild music of the Bull began;
When through the chanting priestly clan
Walk'd Ramses, and the high sun kiss'd
This stone, with blessing scored and ban —
This monument in London mist.

The stone endures though gods be numb;
Though human effort, plot, and plan
Be sifted, drifted, like the sum
Of sands in wastes Arabian.
What king may deem him more than man,
What priest says Faith can Time resist
While *this* endures to mark their span —
This monument in London mist?

ENVOY

Prince, the stone's shade on your divan
Falls; it is longer that ye wist:
It preaches, as Time's gnomon can,
This monument in London mist!

BALLADE OF ROULETTE

TO R. R.

THIS life — one was thinking to-day,
In the midst of a medley of fancies —
Is a game, and the board where we play
Green earth with her poppies and pansies.
Let *manque* be faded romances,
Be *passe* remorse and regret;
Hearts dance with the wheel as it dances —
The wheel of Dame Fortune's roulette.

The lover will stake as he may
His heart on his Peggies and Nancies;
The girl has her beauty to lay;
The saint has his prayers and his trances;
The poet bets endless expanses
In Dreamland; the scamp has his debt:
How they gaze at the wheel as it glances —
The wheel of Dame Fortune's roulette!

The Kaiser will stake his array
Of sabres, of Krupps, and of lances;
An Englishman punts with his pay,
And glory the *jeton* of France is;
Your artists, or Whistlers or Vances,
Have voices or colours to bet;
Will you moan that its motion askance is —
The wheel of Dame Fortune's roulette?

ENVOY

The prize that the pleasure enhances?
 The prize is — at last to forget
 The changes, the chops, and the chances —
 The wheel of Dame Fortune's roulette.

BALLADE OF SLEEP

THE hours are passing slow,
I hear their weary tread
Clang from the tower, and go
Back to their kinsfolk dead.
Sleep! death's twin brother dread!
Why dost thou scorn me so?
The wind's voice overhead
Long wakeful here I know,
And music from the steep
Where waters fall and flow.
Wilt thou not hear me, Sleep?

All sounds that might bestow
Rest on the fever'd bed,
All slumb'rous sounds and low
Are mingled here and wed,
And bring no drowsihed.
Shy dreams flit to and fro
With shadowy hair dispread;
With wistful eyes that glow,
And silent robes that sweep.
Thou wilt not hear me; no?
Wilt thou not hear me, Sleep?

What cause hast thou to show
Of sacrifice unsped?
Of all thy slaves below
I most have labourèd
With service sung and said;

Have cull'd such buds as blow,
Soft poppies white and red,
Where thy still gardens grow,
And Lethe's waters weep.
Why, then, art thou my foe?
Wilt thou not hear me, Sleep?

ENVOY

Prince, ere the dark be shred
By golden shafts, ere low
And long the shadows creep :
Lord of the wand of lead,
Soft-footed as the snow,
Wilt thou not hear me, Sleep!

BALLADE OF THE MIDNIGHT FOREST

AFTER THÉODORE DE BANVILLE

STILL sing the mocking fairies, as of old,
Beneath the shade of thorn and holly-tree;
The west wind breathes upon them, pure and cold,
And wolves still dread Diana roaming free
In secret woodland with her company.
'Tis thought the peasants' hovels know her rite
When now the wolds are bathed in silver light,
And first the moonrise breaks the dusky grey,
Then down the dells, with blown soft hair and bright,
And through the dim wood Dian threads her way.

With water-weeds twined in their locks of gold
The strange cold forest-fairies dance in glee,
Sylphs over-timorous and over-bold
Haunt the dark hollows where the dwarf may be,
The wild red dwarf, the nixies' enemy;
Then 'mid their mirth, and laughter, and affright,
The sudden Goddess enters, tall and white,
With one long sigh for summers pass'd away;
The swift feet tear the ivy nets outright
And through the dim wood Dian threads her way.

She gleans her silvan trophies; down the wold
She hears the sobbing of the stags that flee
Mixed with the music of the hunting roll'd,
But her delight is all in archery,

And naught of ruth and pity wotteth she
More than her hounds that follow on the flight ;
The goddess draws a golden bow of might
And thick she rains the gentle shafts that slay.
She tosses loose her locks upon the night,
And through the dim wood Dian threads her way.

ENVOY

Prince, let us leave the din, the dust, the spite,
The gloom and glare of towns, the plague, the blight :
Amid the forest leaves and fountain spray
There is the mystic home of our delight,
And through the dim wood Dian threads her way.

BALLADE OF THE BOOK-HUNTER

IN torrid heats of late July,
In March, beneath the bitter *bise*,
He book-hunts while the loungers fly, —
He book-hunts, though December freeze ;
In breeches baggy at the knees,
And heedless of the public jeers,
For these, for these, he hoards his fees, —
Aldines, Bodonis, Elzevirs.

No dismal stall escapes his eye,
He turns o'er tomes of low degrees,
There soiled romanticists may lie,
Or Restoration comedies ;
Each tract that flutters in the breeze
For him is charged with hopes and fears,
In mouldy novels fancy sees
Aldines, Bodonis, Elzevirs.

With restless eyes that peer and spy,
Sad eyes that heed not skies nor trees,
In dismal nooks he loves to pry,
Whose motto evermore is *Spes* !
But ah ! the fabled treasure flees ;
Grown rarer with the fleeting years,
In rich men's shelves they take their ease, —
Aldines, Bodonis, Elzevirs !

ENVOY

Prince, all the things that tease and please, —
Fame, hope, wealth, kisses, cheers, and tears,
What are they but such toys as these —
Aldines, Bodonis, Elzevirs?

BALLADE OF THE VOYAGE TO CYTHERA

AFTER THÉODORE DE BANVILLE

I KNOW Cythera long is desolate ;
I know the winds have stripp'd the gardens green.
Alas, my friends ! beneath the fierce sun's weight
A barren reef lies where Love's flowers have been,
Nor ever lover on that coast is seen !
So be it, but we seek a fabled shore,
To lull our vague desires with mystic lore,
To wander where Love's labyrinths beguile ;
There let us land, there dream for evermore :
" It may be we shall touch the happy isle."

The sea may be our sepulchre. If Fate,
If tempests wreak their wrath on us, serene
We watch the bolt of heaven, and scorn the hate
Of angry gods that smite us in their spleen.
Perchance the jealous mists are but the screen
That veils the fairy coast we would explore.
Come, though the sea be vex'd, and breakers roar,
Come, for the air of this old world is vile,
Haste we, and toil, and faint not at the oar ;
" It may be we shall touch the happy isle."

Grey serpents trail in temples desecrate
Where Cypris smiled, the golden maid, the queen,
And ruined is the palace of our state ;
But happy Loves flit round the mast, and keen
The shrill wind sings the silken cords between.
Heroes are we, with wearied hearts and sore,

Whose flower is faded and whose locks are hoar,
Yet haste, light skiffs, where myrtle thickets smile;
Love's panthers sleep 'mid roses, as of yore:
"It may be we shall touch the happy isle!"

ENVOY

Sad eyes! the blue sea laughs, as heretofore.
Ah, singing birds your happy music pour!
Ah, poets, leave the sordid earth awhile;
Flit to these ancient gods we still adore:
"It may be we shall touch the happy isle!"

BALLADE OF THE MUSE

Quem tu, Melpomene, semel.

THE man whom once, Melpomene,
Thou look'st on with benignant sight,
Shall never at the Isthmus be
A boxer eminent in fight,
Nor fares he foremost in the flight
Of Grecian cars to victory,
Nor goes with Delian laurels dight,
The man thou lov'st, Melpomene!

Not him the Capitol shall see,
As who hath crush'd the threats and might
Of monarchs, march triumphantly;
But Fame shall crown him, in his right
Of all the Roman lyre that smite
The first; so woods of Tivoli
Proclaim him, so her waters bright,
The man thou lov'st, Melpomene!

The sons of queenly Rome count *me*,
Me too, with them whose chants delight, —
The poets' kindly company;
Now broken is the tooth of spite,
But thou, that temperest aright
The golden lyre, all, all to thee
He owes — life, fame, and fortune's height —
The man thou lov'st, Melpomene!

ENVOY

Queen, that to mute lips could'st unite
The wild swan's dying melody!
Thy gifts, ah! how shall he requite —
The man thou lov'st, Melpomene?

BALLADE OF DEAD CITIES

TO E. W. GOSSE

THE dust of Carthage and the dust
Of Babel on the desert wold,
The loves of Corinth, and the lust,
Orchomenos increased with gold;
The town of Jason, over-bold,
And Cherson, smitten in her prime —
What are they but a dream half-told?
Where are the cities of old time?

In towns that were a kingdom's trust,
In dim Atlantic forests' fold,
The marble wasteth to a crust,
The granite crumbles into mould;
O'er these — left nameless from of old —
As over Shinar's brick and slime,
One vast forgetfulness is roll'd —
Where are the cities of old time?

The lapse of ages, and the rust,
The fire, the frost, the waters cold,
Efface the evil and the just;
From Thebes, that Eriphyle sold,
To drown'd Caer-Is, whose sweet bells toll'd
Beneath the wave a dreamy chime
That echo'd from the mountain-hold, —
"Where are the cities of old time?"

ENVOY

Prince, all thy towns and cities must
Decay as these, till all their crime,
And mirth, and wealth, and toil are thrust
Where are the cities of old time.

BALLADE OF AUTUMN

WE built a castle in the air,
In summer weather, you and I,
The wind and sun were in your hair, —
Gold hair against a sapphire sky:
When Autumn came, with leaves that fly
Before the storm, across the plain,
You fled from me, with scarce a sigh —
My Love returns no more again!

The windy lights of Autumn flare:
I watch the moonlit sails go by;
I marvel how men toil and fare,
The weary business that they ply!
Their voyaging is vanity,
And fairy gold is all their gain,
And all the winds of winter cry,
“My Love returns no more again!”

Here, in my castle of Despair,
I sit alone with memory;
The wind-fed wolf has left his lair,
To keep the outcast company.
The brooding owl he hoots hard by,
The hare shall kindle on thy hearth-stane,
The Rhymer's soothest prophecy, — ¹
My Love returns no more again!

¹ Thomas of Ercildoune.

ENVOY

Lady, my home until I die
Is here, where youth and hope were slain ;
They flit, the ghosts of our July,
My Love returns no more again !

BALLADE OF TRUE WISDOM

WHILE others are asking for beauty or fame,
Or praying to know that for which they should
prayer,

Or courting Queen Venus, that affable dame,
Or chasing the Muses the weary and grey,
The sage has found out a more excellent way —
To Pan and to Pallas his incense he showers,
And his humble petition puts up day by day,
For a house full of books, and a garden of flowers.

Inventors may bow to the God that is lame,
And crave from the fire on his stithy a ray;
Philosophers kneel to the God without name,
Like the people of Athens, agnostics are they;
The hunter a fawn to Diana will slay,
The maiden wild roses will wreath for the Hours;
But the wise man will ask, ere libation he pay,
For a house full of books, and a garden of flowers.

Oh! grant me a life without pleasure or blame
(As mortals count pleasure who rush through their day
With a speed to which that of the tempest is tame) !
O grant me a house by the beach of a bay,
Where the waves can be surly in winter, and play
With the sea-weed in summer, ye bountiful powers!
And I'd leave all the hurry, the noise, and the fray,
For a house full of books, and a garden of flowers.

ENVOY

Gods, grant or withhold it; your "yea" and your "nay"
Are immutable, heedless of outcry of ours :
But life *is* worth living, and here we would stay
For a house full of books, and a garden of flowers.

BALLADE OF LIFE

“ ‘Dead and gone,’ — a sorry burden
of the Ballad of Life.”

Death's Jest Book.

SAY, fair maids, maying
In gardens green,
In deep dells straying,
What end hath been
Two Mays between
Of the flowers that shone
And your own sweet queen —
“They are dead and gone!”

Say, grave priests, praying
In dule and teen,
From cells decaying
What have ye seen
Of the proud and mean,
Of Judas and John,
Of the foul and clean? —
“They are dead and gone!”

Say, kings, arraying
Loud wars to win,
Of your manslaying
What gain ye glean?
“They are fierce and keen,
But they fall anon,
On the sword that lean, —
They are dead and gone!”

ENVOY

Through the mad world's scene,
We are drifting on,
To this tune, I ween,
" They are dead and gone ! "

BALLADE OF DEAD LADIES

(AFTER VILLON)

NAY, tell me now in what strange air
The Roman Flora dwells to-day.
Where Archippiada hides, and where
Beautiful Thais has passed away?
Whence answers Echo, afield, astray,
By mere or stream, — around, below?
Lovelier she than a woman of clay;
Nay, but where is the last year's snow?

Where is wise Héloïse, that care
Brought on Abeilard, and dismay?
All for her love he found a snare,
A maimed poor monk in orders grey;
And where's the Queen who willed to slay
Buridan, that in a sack must go
Afloat down Seine, — a perilous way —
Nay, but where is the last year's snow?

Where's that White Queen, a lily rare,
With her sweet song, the Siren's lay?
Where's Bertha Broad-foot, Beatrice fair?
Alys and Ermengarde, where are they?
Good Joan, whom English did betray
In Rouen town, and burned her? No,
Maiden and Queen, no man may say;
Nay, but where is the last year's snow?

ENVOY

Prince, all this week thou need'st not pray,
Nor yet this year the thing to know.
One burden answers, ever and aye,
"Nay, but where is the last year's snow?"

VILLON'S BALLADE

OF GOOD COUNSEL, TO HIS FRIENDS OF
EVIL LIFE

NAY, be you pardonor or cheat,
Or cogger keen, or mumper shy,
You'll burn your fingers at the feat,
And howl like other folks that fry.
All evil folks that love a lie !
And where goes gain that greed amasses,
By wile, and trick, and thievery ?
'Tis all to taverns and to lasses !

Rhyme, rail, dance, play the cymbals sweet,
With game, and shame, and jollity,
Go jigging through the field and street,
With *myst'ry* and *morality* ;
Win gold at *gleek*, — and that will fly,
Where all you gain at *passage* passes, —
And that's ? You know as well as I,
'Tis all to taverns and to lasses !

Nay, forth from all such filth retreat,
Go delve and ditch, in wet or dry,
Turn groom, give horse and mule their meat,
If you've no clerkly skill to ply ;
You'll gain enough, with husbandry,
But — sow hempseed and such wild grasses,
And where goes all you take thereby ? —
'Tis all to taverns and to lasses !

ENVOY

Your clothes, your hose, your broidery,
Your linen that the snow surpasses,
Or ere they're worn, off they fly,
'Tis all to taverns and to lasses!

BALLADE OF THE BOOKWORM

FAR in the Past I peer, and see
A Child upon the Nursery floor,
A Child with books upon his knee,
Who asks, like Oliver, for more!
The number of his years is IV,
And yet in Letters hath he skill,
How deep he dives in Fairy-lore!
The Books I loved, I love them still!

One gift the Fairies gave me: (Three
They commonly bestowed of yore)
The Love of Books, the Golden Key
That opens the Enchanted Door ;
Behind it BLUEBEARD lurks, and o'er
And o'er doth JACK his Giants kill,
And there is all ALADDIN'S store, —
The Books I loved, I love them still!

Take all, but leave my Books to me!
These heavy creels of old we bore
We fill not now, nor wander free,
Nor wear the heart that once we wore ;
Not now each River seems to pour
His waters from the Muses' hill ;
Though something's gone from stream and shore,
The Books I loved, I love them still!

ENVOY

Fate, that art Queen by shore and sea,
We bow submissive to thy will,
Ah grant, by some benign decree,
The Books I loved — to love them still.

BALLADE OF OLD PLAYS

(*Les Œuvres de Monsieur Molière. A Paris,
chez Louys Billaine, à la Palme.*)

M. D. C. LXVI.)

LA COUR

WHEN these Old Plays were new, the King,
Beside the Cardinal's chair,
Applauded, 'mid the courtly ring,
The verses of Molière;
Point-lace was then the only wear,
Old Corneille came to woo,
And bright Du Parc was young and fair,
When these Old Plays were new!

LA COMÉDIE

How shrill the butcher's cat-calls ring,
How loud the lackeys swear!
Black pipe-bowls on the stage they fling,
At Brécourt, fuming there!
The Porter's stabbed! a Mousquetaire
Breaks in with noisy crew —
'Twas all a commonplace affair
When these Old Plays were new!

LA VILLE

When these Old Plays were new! They bring
A host of phantoms rare:
Old jests that float, old jibes that sting,
Old faces peaked with care:

Ménage's snirk, de Visé's stare,
The thefts of Jean Ribou, — ¹
Ah, publishers were hard to bear
When these Old Plays were new.

ENVOY

Ghosts, at your Poet's word ye dare
To break Death's dungeons through,
And frisk, as in that golden air,
When these Old Plays were new!

¹ A knavish publisher.

BALLADE OF HIS BOOKS

HERE stand my books, line upon line
They reach the roof, and row by row,
They speak of faded tastes of mine,
And things I did, but do not, know :
Old school books, useless long ago,
Old Logics, where the spirit, railed in,
Could scarcely answer "yes" or "no" —
The many things I've tried and failed in !

Here's Villon, in morocco fine,
(The Poet starved, in mud and snow,)
Glatigny does not crave to dine,
And René's tears forget to flow.
And here's a work by Mrs. Crowe,
With hosts of ghosts and bogies jailed in ;
Ah, all my ghosts have gone below —
The many things I've tried and failed in !

He's touched, this mouldy Greek divine,
The Princess D'Este's hand of snow ;
And here the arms of D'Hoym shine,
And there's a tear-bestained Rousseau :
Here's Carlyle shrieking "woe on woe"
(The first edition, this, he wailed in) ;
I once believed in him — but oh,
The many things I've tried and failed in !

ENVOY

Prince, tastes may differ; mine and thine
Quite other balances are scaled in;
May you succeed, though I repine —
“The many things I’ve tried and failed in!”

BALLADE OF THE DREAM

SWIFT as sound of music fled
When no more the organ sighs,
Sped as all old days are sped,
So your lips, love, and your eyes,
So your gentle-voiced replies
Mine one hour in sleep that seem,
Rise and flit when slumber flies,
Following darkness like a dream !

Like the scent from roses red,
Like the dawn from golden skies,
Like the semblance of the dead
From the living love that hies,
Like the shifting shade that lies
On the moonlight-silvered stream,
So you rise when dreams arise,
Following darkness like a dream !

Could some spell, or sung or said,
Could some kindly witch and wise,
Lull for aye this dreaming head
In a mist of memories,
I would lie like him who lies
Where the lights on Latmos gleam, —
Wake not, find not Paradise
Following darkness like a dream !

ENVOY

Sleep, that giv'st what Life denies,
Shadowy bounties and supreme,
Bring the dearest face that flies
Following darkness like a dream!

BALLADE OF BLIND LOVE

(AFTER LYONNET DE COISMES)

WHO have loved and ceased to love, forget
That ever they loved in their lives, they say ;
Only remember the fever and fret,
And the pain of Love, that was all his pay ;
All the delight of him passes away
From hearts that hoped, and from lips that met —
Too late did I love you, my love, and yet
I shall never forget till my dying day.

Too late were we 'ware of the secret net
That meshes the feet in the flowers that stray ;
There were we taken and snared, Lisette,
In the dungeon of **La Fausse Amistie** ;
Help was there none in the wide world's fray,
Joy was there none in the gift and the debt ;
Too late we knew it, too long regret —
I shall never forget till my dying day !

We must live our lives, though the sun be set,
Must meet in the masque where parts we play,
Must cross in the maze of Life's minuet ;
Our yea is yea, and our nay is nay :
But while snows of winter or flowers of May
Are the sad year's shroud or coronet,
In the season of rose or of violet,
I shall never forget till my dying day !

ENVOY

Queen, when the clay is my coverlet,
When I am dead, and when you are grey,
Vow, where the grass of the grave is wet,
"I shall never forget till my dying day!"

BALLADE OF MIDDLE AGE

O UR youth began with tears and sighs,
With seeking what we could not find
Our verses all were threnodies,
In elegiacs still we whined;
Our ears were deaf, our eyes were blind,
We sought and knew not what we sought.
We marvel, now we look behind :
Life's more amusing than we thought !

Oh, foolish youth, untimely wise !
Oh, phantoms of the sickly mind !
What ? not content with seas and skies,
With rainy clouds and southern wind,
With common cares and faces kind,
With pains and joys each morning brought ?
Ah, old, and worn, and tired we find
Life's more amusing than we thought !

Though youth "turns spectre-thin and dies,"
To mourn for youth we're not inclined ;
We set our souls on salmon flies,
We whistle where we once repined.
Confound the woes of human-kind !
By heaven we're "well deceived," I wot ;
Who hum, contented or resigned,
"Life's more amusing than we thought !"

ENVOY

O nate mecum, worn and lined
 Our faces show, but *that* is naught;
 Our hearts are young 'neath wrinkled rind:
 Life's more amusing than we thought!

BALLADE OF WORLDLY WEALTH

(OLD FRENCH)

MONEY taketh town and wall,
Fort and ramp without a blow;
Money moves the merchants all,
While the tides shall ebb and flow;
Money maketh Evil show
Like the Good, and Truth like lies:
These alone can ne'er bestow
Youth, and health, and Paradise.

Money maketh festival,
Wine she buys, and beds can strow;
Round the necks of captains tall,
Money wins them chains to throw,
Marches soldiers to and fro,
Gaineth ladies with sweet eyes:
These alone can ne'er bestow
Youth, and health, and Paradise.

Money wins the priest his stall;
Money mitres buys, I trow,
Red hats for the Cardinal,
Abbeys for the novice low;
Money maketh sin as snow,
Place of penitence supplies:
These alone can ne'er bestow
Youth, and health, and Paradise.

BALLADE OF HIS CHOICE OF A
SEPULCHRE

HERE I'd come when weariest!
Here the breast
Of the Windburg's tufted over
Deep with bracken; here his crest
Takes the west,
Where the wide-winged hawk doth hover.

Silent here are lark and plover;
In the cover
Deep below the cushat best
Loves his mate, and croons above her
O'er their nest,
Where the wide-winged hawk doth hover.

Bring me here, Life's tired-out guest,
To the blest
Bed that waits the weary rover,
Here should failure be confessed;
Ends my quest,
Where the wide-winged hawk doth hover!

ENVOY

Friend, or stranger kind, or lover,
Ah, fulfil a last behest,
Let me rest
Where the wide-winged hawk doth hover!

TOUT FINIT PAR DES CHANSONS

(BALLADE EN GUISE DE RONDEAU)

ALL ends in song! Dame Nature toiled
In stellar space, by land, by sea,
And many a monstrous thing she spoiled,
And many another brought to be;
Strange brutes that sprawled, strange stars that flee,
Or flare the steadfast signs among:
What profit thence — to you or me?
All ends in song!

All ends in song! But Nature moiled
And brought forth Man, who deems him free,
Who dreams 'twas his own hand embroiled
The tangles of his destiny:
Who fashioned empires, — who but he? —
Who fashioned gods, a motley throng:
They fall, they fade by Time's decree, —
All ends in song!

All ends in song! *We* strive, are foiled,
Are broken-hearted, — even we:
Where that old sinful snake is coiled
We shake the knowledgeable tree,
We listen to the serpent's plea,
“As Gods shall ye know Right and Wrong,” —
And *this* is all the mystery, —
“All ends in song!”

ENVOY

Muse, or in sooth or mockery,
Or brief of days, or lasting long,
Our love, or hate, or gloom, or glee
All ends in song!

DIZAIN

*As, to the pipe, with rhythmic feet
In windings of some old-world dance,
The smiling couples cross and meet,
Join hands, and then in line advance,
So, to these fair old tunes of France,
Through all their maze of to-and-fro,
The light-beeled numbers laughing go,
Retreat, return, and ere they flee,
One moment pause in panting row,
And seem to say — Vos Plaudite !*

AUSTIN DOBSON.



VERSES VAIN



"Branles, Virelais, Ballades, and Verses vain."

THE FAERIE QUEENE.

ALMAE MATRES

(ST. ANDREWS, 1862. OXFORD, 1865)

ST. ANDREWS *by the Northern sea,*
A haunted town it is to me!

A little city, worn and grey,
The grey North Ocean girds it round.
And o'er the rocks, and up the bay,
The long sea-rollers surge and sound.
And still the thin and biting spray
Drives down the melancholy street,
And still endure, and still decay,
Towers that the salt winds vainly beat.
Ghost-like and shadowy they stand
Dim mirrored in the wet sea-sand.

St. Leonard's chapel, long ago
We loitered idly where the tall
Fresh budded mountain ashes blow
Within thy desecrated wall:
The tough roots rent the tomb below,
The April birds sang clamorous,
We did not dream, we could not know
How hardly Fate would deal with us!

O, broken minster, looking forth
Beyond the bay, above the town,
O, winter of the kindly North,
O, college of the scarlet gown,
And shining sands beside the sea,
And stretch of links beyond the sand,

Once more I watch you, and to me
It is as if I touched his hand!

And therefore art thou yet more dear,
O, little city, grey and sere,
Though shrunken from thine ancient pride
And lonely by thy lonely sea,
Than these fair halls on Isis' side,
Where Youth an hour came back to me!

A land of waters green and clear,
Of willows and of poplars tall,
And, in the spring time of the year,
The white may breaking over all,
And Pleasure quick to come at call.
And summer rides by marsh and wold,
And Autumn with her crimson pall
About the towers of Magdalen rolled;
And strange enchantments from the past,
And memories of the friends of old,
And strong Tradition, binding fast
The "flying terms" with bands of gold,—

All these hath Oxford: all are dear,
But dearer far the little town,
The drifting surf, the wintry year,
The college of the scarlet gown,
St. Andrews by the Northern sea,
That is a haunted town to me!

A DREAM

WHY will you haunt my sleep?
You know it may not be,
The grave is wide and deep,
That sunders you and me;
In bitter dreams we reap
The sorrow we have sown,
And I would I were asleep,
Forgotten and alone!

We knew and did not know,
We saw and did not see,
The nets that long ago
Fate wove for you and me;
The cruel nets that keep
The birds that sob and moan,
And I would we were asleep,
Forgotten and alone!

* * * *

DESIDERIUM

IN MEMORIAM S. F. A.

THE call of homing rooks, the shrill
Song of some bird that watches late,
The cries of children break the still
Sad twilight by the churchyard gate.

And o'er your far-off tomb the grey
Sad twilight broods, and from the trees
The rooks call on their homeward way,
And are you heedless quite of these?

The clustered rowan berries red
And Autumn's may, the clematis,
They droop above your dreaming head,
And these, and all things must you miss?

Ah, you that loved the twilight air,
The dim lit hour of quiet best,
At last, at last you have your share
Of what life gave so seldom, rest!

Yes, rest beyond all dreaming deep,
Or labour, nearer the Divine,
And pure from fret, and smooth as sleep,
And gentle as thy soul, is thine!

So let it be! But could I know
That thou in this soft autumn eve,
This hush of earth that pleased thee so,
Hadst pleasure still, I might not grieve.

RONSARD'S GRAVE

YE wells, ye founts that fall
From the steep mountain wall,
That fall, and flash, and fleet
With silver feet,

Ye woods, ye streams that lave
The meadows with your wave,
Ye hills, and valley fair,
Attend my prayer!

When Heaven and Fate decree
My latest hour for me,
When I must pass away
From pleasant day,

I ask that none may break
The marble for my sake,
Wishful to make more fair
My sepulchre.

Only a laurel tree
Shall shade the grave of me,
Only Apollo's bough
Shall guard me now!

Now shall I be at rest
Among the spirits blest,
The happy dead that dwell —
Where, — who may tell?

The snow and wind and hail
May never there prevail,
Nor ever thunder fall
Nor storm at all.

But always fadeless there
The woods are green and fair,
And faithful ever more
Spring to that shore!

There shall I ever hear
Alcaeus' music clear,
And sweetest of all things
There SAPPHO sings.

ROMANCE

My Love dwelt in a Northern land.
A grey tower in a forest green
Was hers, and far on either hand
The long wash of the waves was seen,
And leagues on leagues of yellow sand,
The woven forest boughs between!

And through the silver Northern night
The sunset slowly died away,
And herds of strange deer, lily-white,
Stole forth among the branches grey;
About the coming of the light,
They fled like ghosts before the day!

I know not if the forest green
Still girdles round that castle grey;
I know not if the boughs between
The white deer vanish ere the day;
Above my Love the grass is green,
My heart is colder than the clay!

VILLANELLE

(TO M. JOSEPH BOULMIER, AUTHOR OF
" LES VILLANELLES ")

VILLANELLE, why art thou mute?
Hath the singer ceased to sing?
Hath the Master lost his lute?

Many a pipe and scrannel flute
On the breeze their discords fling;
Villanelle, why art *thou* mute?

Sound of tumult and dispute,
Noise of war the echoes bring;
Hath the Master lost his lute?

Once he sang of bud and shoot
In the season of the Spring;
Villanelle, why art thou mute?

Fading leaf and falling fruit
Say, " The year is on the wing,
Hath the Master lost his lute? "

Ere the axe lie at the root,
Ere the winter come as king,
Villanelle, why art thou mute?
Hath the Master lost his lute?

TRIOLETS AFTER MOSCHUS

Αἰαῖ ται μαλάχαι μὲν ἐπ' ἂν κατὰ κᾶπον ὄλωνται
 ὕστερον ἂν ζῶντι καὶ εἰς ἕτος ἄλλο φύοντι
 ἄμμες δ' " οἱ μεγάλοι καὶ καρτεροὶ οἱ σοφοὶ ἄνδρες
 ὁππότε πρᾶτα θάνωμες ἀνάκοι ἐν χθονὶ κοίλα
 'εὐδομες ἔν μάλ' α μακρὸν ἀτέρμονα νήγρετον ὕπνον.

ALAS, for us no second spring,
 Like mallows in the garden-bed,
 For these the grave has lost his sting,
 Alas, for *us* no second spring,
 Who sleep without awakening,
 And, dead, for ever more are dead,
 Alas, for us no second spring,
 Like mallows in the garden-bed !

Alas, the strong, the wise, the brave
 That boast themselves the sons of men !
 Once they go down into the grave —
 Alas, the strong, the wise, the brave, —
 They perish and have none to save,
 They are sown, and are not raised again ;
 Alas, the strong, the wise, the brave,
 That boast themselves the sons of men !

IN TINTAGEL

LUI

AH lady, lady, leave the creeping mist,
And leave the iron castle by the sea!

ELLE

Nay, from the sea there came a ghost that kissed
My lips, and so I cannot come to thee!

LUI

Ah lady, leave the cruel landward wind
That crusts the blighted flowers with bitter foam!

ELLE

Nay, for his arms are cold and strong to bind,
And I must dwell with him and make my home!

LUI

Come, for the Spring is fair in Joyous Guard
And down deep alleys sweet birds sing again.

ELLE

But I must tarry with the winter hard,
And with the bitter memory of pain,
Although the Spring be fair in Joyous Guard,
And in the gardens glad birds sing again!

PISIDICÊ

The incident is from the Love Stories of Parthenius, who preserved fragments of a lost epic on the expedition of Achilles against Lesbos, an island allied with Troy.

THE daughter of the Lesbian king
Within her bower she watched the war,
Far off she heard the arrows ring,
The smitten harness ring afar ;
And, fighting from the foremost car,
Saw one that smote where all must flee ;
More fair than the Immortals are
He seemed to fair Pisidicê !

She saw, she loved him, and her heart
Before Achilles, Peleus' son,
Threw all its guarded gates apart,
A maiden fortress lightly won !
And, ere that day of fight was done,
No more of land or faith recked she,
But joyed in her new life begun, —
Her life of love, Pisidicê !

She took a gift into her hand,
As one that had a boon to crave ;
She stole across the ruined land
Where lay the dead without a grave,
And to Achilles' hand she gave
Her gift, the secret postern's key.
"To-morrow let me be thy slave !"
Moaned to her love Pisidicê.

Ere dawn the Argives' clarion call
Rang down Methymna's burning street ;
They slew the sleeping warriors all,
They drove the women to the fleet,
Save one, that to Achilles' feet
Clung, but, in sudden wrath, cried he :
" For her no doom but death is meet,"
And there men stoned Pisidicê.

In havens of that haunted coast,
Amid the myrtles of the shore,
The moon sees many a maiden ghost
Love's outcast now and evermore.
The silence hears the shades deplore
Their hour of dear-bought love ; but *thee*
The waves lull, 'neath thine olives hoar,
To dreamless rest, Pisidicê !

A PORTRAIT OF 1783

YOUR hair and chin are like the hair
And chin Burne-Jones's ladies wear;
You were unfashionably fair

In '83;

And sad you were when girls are gay,
You read a book about *Le vrai*
Mérite de l'homme, alone in May.

What *can* it be,
Le vrai mérite de l'homme? Not gold,
Not titles that are bought and sold,
Not wit that flashes and is cold,

But Virtue merely!
Instructed by Jean-Jacques Rousseau
(And Jean-Jacques, surely, ought to know),
You bade the crowd of foplings go,

You glanced severely,
Dreaming beneath the spreading shade
Of "that vast hat the Graces made;"¹
So Rouget sang — while yet he played

With courtly rhyme,
And hymned great Doisi's red perruque,
And Nice's eyes, and Zulmé's look,
And dead canaries, ere he shook

The sultry time

1 Vous y verrez, belle Julie,
Que ce chapeau tout maltraité
Fut, dans un instant de folie,
Par les Grâces même inventé.

"À Julie." *Essais en Prose et en Vers*, par Joseph
Rouget de Lisle; Paris. An. V. de la République.

With strains like thunder. Loud and low
Methinks I hear the murmur grow,
The tramp of men that come and go
With fire and sword.

They war against the quick and dead,
Their flying feet are dashed with red,
As theirs the vintaging that tread
Before the Lord.

O head unfashionably fair,
What end was thine, for all thy care?
We only see thee dreaming there:

We cannot see
The breaking of thy vision, when
The Rights of Man were lords of men,
When virtue won her own again

In '93.

FROM THE EAST TO THE WEST

RETURNING from what other seas
Dost thou renew thy murmuring,
Weak Tide, and hast thou aught of these
To tell, the shores where float and cling
My love, my hope, my memories?

Say does my lady wake to note
The gold light into silver die?
Or do thy waves make lullaby,
While dreams of hers, like angels, float
Through star-sown spaces of the sky?

Ah, would such angels came to me
That dreams of mine might speak with hers,
Nor wake the slumber of the sea
With words as low as winds that be
Awake among the gossamers!

THE MOON'S MINION

(FROM THE PROSE OF C. BAUDELAIRE)

THINE eyes are like the sea, my dear,
The wand'ring waters, green and grey;
Thine eyes are wonderful and clear,
And deep, and deadly, even as they;
The spirit of the changeful sea
Informs thine eyes at night and noon,
She sways the tides, and the heart of thee,
The mystic, sad, capricious Moon!

The Moon came down the shining stair
Of clouds that fleck the summer sky,
She kissed thee, saying, "Child, be fair,
And madden men's hearts, even as I;
Thou shalt love all things strange and sweet,
That know me and are known of me;
The lover thou shalt never meet,
The land where thou shalt never be!"

She held thee in her chill embrace,
She kissed thee with cold lips divine,
She left her pallor on thy face,
That mystic ivory face of thine;
And now I sit beside thy feet,
And all my heart is far from thee,
Dreaming of her I shall not meet,
And of the land I shall not see!

VILLANELLE

TO LUCIA

A POLLO left the golden Muse
And shepherded a mortal's sheep,
Theocritus of Syracuse !

To mock the giant swain that woos
The sea-nymph in the sunny deep,
Apollo left the golden Muse.

He drove afield his lambs and ewes,
Where Milon and where Battus reap,
Theocritus of Syracuse !

To watch thy tunny-fishers cruise
Below the dim Sicilian steep
Apollo left the golden Muse.

Ye twain did loiter in the dews,
Ye slept the swain's unfever'd sleep,
Theocritus of Syracuse !

That Time might half with *his* confuse
Thy songs, — like his, that laugh and leap, —
Theocritus of Syracuse,
Apollo left the golden Muse !

Νήνεμος 'Αιών

I WOULD my days had been in other times,
A moment in the long unnumbered years
That knew the sway of Horus and of hawk,
In peaceful lands that border on the Nile.

I would my days had been in other times,
Lulled by the sacrifice and mumbled hymn
Between the Five great Rivers, or in shade
And shelter of the cool Himâlayan hills.

I would my days had been in other times,
That I in some old abbey of Touraine
Had watched the rounding grapes, and lived my life,
Ere ever Luther came or Rabelais!

I would my days had been in other times,
When quiet life to death not terrible
Drifted, as ashes of the Santhal dead
Drift down the sacred Rivers to the Sea!

THE SPINET

M*Y heart's an old Spinet with strings
To laughter chiefly tuned, but some
That Fate has practised hard on, dumb,
They answer not whoever sings.
The ghosts of half-forgotten things
Will touch the keys with fingers numb,
The little mocking spirits come
And thrill it with their fairy wings.*

*A jingling harmony it makes
My heart, my lyre, my old Spinet,
And now a memory it wakes,
And now the music means "forget,"
And little heed the player takes
Howe'er the thoughtful critic fret.*



SONNETS



HOMER

HOMER, thy song men liken to the sea
With all the notes of music in its tone,
With tides that wash the dim dominion
Of Hades, and light waves that laugh in glee
Around the isles enchanted; nay, to me
Thy verse seems as the River of source unknown
That glasses Egypt's temples overthrown
In his sky-nurtured stream, eternally.

No wiser we than men of heretofore
To find thy sacred fountains guarded fast;
Enough, thy flood makes green our human shore,
As Nilus Egypt, rolling down his vast
His fertile flood, that murmurs evermore
Of gods dethroned, and empires in the past.

HOMERIC UNITY

THE sacred keep of Ilion is rent
By shaft and pit; foiled waters wander slow
Through plains where Simois and Scamander went
To war with Gods and heroes long ago.
Not yet to tired Cassandra, lying low
In rich Mycenæ, do the Fates relent:
The bones of Agamemnon are a show,
And ruined is his royal monument.

The dust and awful treasures of the Dead,
Hath Learning scattered wide, but vainly thee,
Homer, she meteth with her tool of lead,
And strives to rend thy songs; too blind to see
The crown that burns on thine immortal head
Of indivisible supremacy!

THE ODYSSEY

As one that for a weary space has lain
Lulled by the song of Circe and her wine
In gardens near the pale of Proserpine,
Where that Ææan isle forgets the main,
And only the low lutes of love complain,
And only shadows of wan lovers pine,
As such an one were glad to know the brine
Salt on his lips, and the large air again, —
So gladly, from the songs of modern speech
Men turn, and see the stars, and feel the free
Shrill wind beyond the close of heavy flowers,
And through the music of the languid hours,
They hear like ocean on a western beach
The surge and thunder of the Odyssey.

IN ITHACA

"And now I am greatly repenting that ever I left my life with thee, and the immortality thou didst promise me." — *Letter of Odysseus to Calypso. Luciani Vera Historia.*

'Tis thought Odysseus when the strife was o'er
With all the waves and wars, a weary while,
Grew restless in his disenchanted isle,
And still would watch the sunset, from the shore,
Go down the ways of gold, and evermore
His sad heart followed after, mile on mile,
Back to the Goddess of the magic wile,
Calypso, and the love that was of yore.

Thou too, thy haven gained, must turn thee yet
To look across the sad and stormy space,
Years of a youth as bitter as the sea,
Ah, with a heavy heart, and eyelids wet,
Because, within a fair forsaken place
The life that might have been is lost to thee.

BION

THE wail of Moschus on the mountains crying
The Muses heard, and loved it long ago ;
They heard the hollows of the hills replying,
They heard the weeping water's overflow ;
They winged the sacred strain — the song undying,
The song that all about the world must go, —
When poets for a poet dead are sighing,
The minstrels for a minstrel friend laid low.

And dirge to dirge that answers, and the weeping
For Adonais by the summer sea,
The plaints for Lycidas, and Thyrsis (sleeping
Far from "the forest ground called Thessaly,")
These hold thy memory, Bion, in their keeping,
And are but echoes of the moan for thee.

HERODOTUS IN EGYPT

HE left the land of youth, he left the young,
The smiling gods of Greece; he passed the isle
Where Jason loitered, and where Sappho sung,
He sought the secret-founted wave of Nile,
And of their old world, dead a weary while,
Heard the priests murmur in their mystic tongue,
And through the fanes went voyaging, among
Dark tribes that worshipped Cat and Crocodile.

He learned the tales of death Divine and birth,
Strange loves of Hawk and Serpent, Sky and Earth,
The marriage, and the slaying of the Sun,
The shrines of gods and beasts he wandered through,
And mocked not at their godhead, for he knew
Behind all creeds the Spirit that is One.

SPRING

(AFTER MELEAGER)

Now the bright crocus flames, and now
The slim narcissus takes the rain,
And, straying o'er the mountain's brow,
The daffodilies bud again.

The thousand blossoms wax and wane
On wold, and heath, and fragrant bough,
But fairer than the flowers art thou,
Than any growth of hill or plain.

Ye gardens, cast your leafy crown,
That my Love's feet may tread it down,
Like lilies on the lilies set;
My Love, whose lips are softer far
Than drowsy poppy petals are,
And sweeter than the violet!

IDEAL

Suggested by a female head in wax, of unknown date, but supposed to be either of the best Greek age, or a work of Raphael or Leonardo. It is now in the Lille Museum.

AH, mystic child of Beauty, nameless maid,
Dateless and fatherless, how long ago,
A Greek, with some rare sadness overweighed,
Shaped thee, perchance, and quite forgot his woe!
Or Raphael thy sweetness did bestow,
While magical his fingers o'er thee strayed,
Or that great pupil of Verrocchio
Redeemed thy still perfection from the shade

That hides all fair things lost, and things unborn,
Where one has fled from me, that wore thy grace,
And that grave tenderness of thine awhile;
Nay, still in dreams I see her, but her face
Is pale, is wasted with a touch of scorn,
And only on thy lips I find her smile.

NATURAL THEOLOGY

ἐπει καὶ τοῦτον ὄλομαι ἀθανάτοισιν
ἔνχεσθαι· Πάντες δὲ θεῶν χατέουσ' ἄνθρωποι.

OD. III. 47.

“ONCE CAGN was like a father, kind and good,
But He was spoiled by fighting many things;
He wars upon the lions in the wood,
And breaks the Thunder-bird's tremendous wings;
But still we cry to Him, — *We are thy brood* —
O Cagn, be merciful! and us He brings
To herds of elands, and great store of food,
And in the desert opens water-springs.”

So Qing, King Nqsha's Bushman hunter, spoke,
Beside the camp-fire, by the fountain fair,
When all were weary, and soft clouds of smoke
Were fading, fragrant, in the twilit air:
And suddenly in each man's heart there woke
A pang, a sacred memory of prayer.

SHE

TO H. R. H.

NOT in the waste beyond the swamps and sand,
The fever-haunted forest and lagoon,
Mysterious Kôr thy walls forsaken stand,
Thy lonely towers beneath the lonely moon,
Not there doth Ayesha linger, rune by rune
Spelling strange scriptures of a people banned.
The world is disenchanted; over soon
Shall Europe send her spies through all the land.

Nay, not in Kôr, but in whatever spot,
In town or field, or by the insatiate sea,
Men brood on buried loves, and unforgot,
Or break themselves on some divine decree,
Or would o'erleap the limits of their lot,
There, in the tombs and deathless, dwelleth SHE!

BEFORE THE SNOW

(AFTER ALBERT GLATIGNY)

THE winter is upon us, not the snow,
The hills are etched on the horizon bare,
The skies are iron grey, a bitter air,
The meagre cloudlets shudder to and fro.
One yellow leaf the listless wind doth blow,
Like some strange butterfly, unclassed and rare.
Your footsteps ring in frozen alleys, where
The black trees seem to shiver as you go.

Beyond lie church and steeple, with their old
And rusty vanes that rattle as they veer,
A sharper gust would shake them from their hold,
Yet up that path, in summer of the year,
And past that melancholy pile we strolled
To pluck wild strawberries, with merry cheer.

THE BURIAL OF MOLIERE

(AFTER J. TRUFFIER)

DEAD—he is dead! The rouge has left a trace
On that thin cheek where shone, perchance, a tear,
Even while the people laughed that held him dear
But yesterday. He died,— and not in grace,
And many a black-robed caitiff starts apace
To slander him whose *Tartuffe* made them fear,
And gold must win a passage for his bier,
And bribe the crowd that guards his resting-place.

Ah, Molière, for that last time of all,
Man's hatred broke upon thee, and went by,
And did but make more fair thy funeral.
Though in the dark they hid thee stealthily,
Thy coffin had the cope of night for pall,
For torch, the stars along the windy sky!

SAN TERENCE

(The village in the bay of Spezia, near which Shelley was living before the wreck of the *Don Juan*.)

MID April seemed like some November day,
When through the glassy waters, dull as lead,
Our boat, like shadowy barques that bear the dead,
Slipped down the long shores of the Spezian bay,
Rounded a point, — and San Terenzo lay
Before us, that gay village, yellow and red,
The roof that covered Shelley's homeless head, —
His house, a place deserted, bleak and grey.

The waves broke on the door-step; fishermen
Cast their long nets, and drew, and cast again.
Deep in the ilex woods we wandered free,
When suddenly the forest glades were stirred
With waving pinions, and a great sea bird
Flew forth, like Shelley's spirit, to the sea!

LOVE'S EASTER

LOVE died here
Long ago;
O'er his bier,
Lying low,
Poppies throw;
Shed no tear;
Year by year,
Roses blow!

Year by year,
Adon — dear
To Love's Queen —
Does not die!
Wakes when green
May is nigh!

TWILIGHT .

(AFTER RICHEPIN)

LIGHT has flown !
Through the grey
The wind's way
The sea's moan
Sound alone !
For the day
These repay
And atone !

Scarce I know,
Listening so
To the streams
Of the 'sea,
If old dreams
Sing to me !

AN OLD GARDEN

THE autumn sun is warm, the soft winds moan,
The golden fruits make sweet September air
In gardens where the apple blossoms were
Through these old Aprils that we twain have known.
I pass along the pathways overgrown ;
Of all the flowers a single poppy there
Droops her tired head, a faded flower and fair,
One poppy that the wandering breeze hath sown.

Here be no roses, and thou lack'st the rose,
No lilies fragrant in the lily bed ;
One poppy in the bare untended close,
Droops, and the sun is shrouded overhead ;
The grey sea-mist upon the sea-wind blows,
Chill ; and methinks the summer-time is dead.

GRASS OF PARNASSUS

PALE star that by the lochs of Galloway,
In wet green places 'twixt the depth and height
Dost keep thine hour while Autumn ebbs away,
When now the moors have doffed the heather bright,
Grass of Parnassus, flower of my delight,
How gladly with the unpermitted bay —
Garlands not mine, and leaves that not decay —
How gladly would I twine thee if I might !

The bays are out of reach ! But far below
The peaks forbidden of the Muses' Hill,
Grass of Parnassus, thy returning snow
Between September and October chill
Doth speak to me of Autumns long ago,
And these kind faces that are with me still.



THREE LETTERS TO DEAD AUTHORS



EPISTLE TO MR. ALEXANDER POPE

FROM mortal Gratitude, decide, my Pope,
 Have Wits Immortal more to fear or hope?
 Wits toil and travail round the Plant of Fame,
 Their Works its Garden, and its Growth their Aim,
 Then Commentators, in unwieldy Dance,
 Break down the Barriers of the trim Pleasance,
 Pursue the Poet, like Actæon's Hounds,
 Beyond the fences of his Garden Grounds,
 Rend from the singing Robes each borrowed Gem,
 Rend from the laurel'd Brows the Diadem,
 And, if one Rag of Character they spare,
 Comes the Biographer, and strips it bare!

Such, Pope, has been thy Fortune, such thy Doom.
 Swift the Ghouls gathered at the Poet's Tomb,
 With Dust of Notes to clog each lordly Line,
 Warburton, Warton, Croker, Bowles, combine!
 Collecting Cackle, Johnson condescends
 To *interview* the Drudges of your Friends.
 Thus though your Courthope holds your merits high,
 And still proclaims your Poems *Poetry*,
 Biographers, un-Boswell-like, have sneered,
 And Dunces edit him whom Dunces feared!

"They say," "What say they?" Not in vain You ask;
 To tell you what they say, behold my Task!
 "Methinks already I your Tears survey"
 As I repeat "the horrid Things they say."¹

¹ *Rape of the Lock.*

Comes El—n first: I fancy you'll agree
Not frenzied Dennis smote so fell as he;
For El—n's Introduction, crabbed and dry,
Like Churchill's Cudgel's¹ marked with *Lie*, and *Lie*!

“ Too dull to know what his own System meant,
Pope yet was skilled new Treasons to invent;
A Snake that puffed himself and stung his Friends,
Few Lied so frequent, for such little Ends;
His mind, like Flesh inflamed,² was raw and sore,
And still, the more he writhed, he stung the more!
Oft in a Quarrel, never in the Right,
His Spirit sank when he was called to fight.
Pope, in the Darkness mining like a Mole,
Forged on Himself, as from Himself he stole,
And what for Caryll once he feigned to feel,
Transferred, in Letters never sent, to Steele!
Still he denied the Letters he had writ,
And still mistook Indecency for Wit.
His very Grammar, so De Quincey cries,
‘ Detains the Reader, and at times defies!’ ”

Fierce El—n thus: no Line escapes his Rage,
And furious Foot-notes growl 'neath every Page:
See St—ph—n next take up the woful Tale,
Prolong the Preaching, and protract the Wail!

“ Some forage Falsehoods from the North and South,
But Pope, poor D——l, lied from Hand to Mouth;³

¹ In Mr. Hogarth's Caricatura.

² Elwin's Pope, ii. 15.

³ “ Poor Pope was always a hand-to-mouth liar.”—*Pope*, by Leslie Stephen, 139.

Affected, hypocritical, and vain,
A Book in Breeches, and a Fop in Grain;
A Fox that found not the high Clusters sour,
The Fanfaron of Vice beyond his power,
Pope yet possessed" — (the Praise will make you start) —
"Mean, morbid, vain, he yet possessed a Heart!
And still we marvel at the Man, and still
Admire his Finish, and applaud his Skill:
Though, as that fabled Barque, a phantom Form,
Eternal strains, nor rounds the Cape of Storm,
Even so Pope strove, nor ever crossed the Line
That from the Noble separates the Fine!"

The Learned thus, and who can quite reply,
Reverse the Judgment, and Retort the Lie?
You reap, in armed Hates that haunt your Name,
Reap what you sowed, the Dragon's Teeth of Fame:
You could not write, and from unenvious Time
Expect the Wreath that crowns the lofty Rhyme,
You still must fight, retreat, attack, defend,
And oft, to snatch a Laurel, lose a Friend!

The Pity of it! And the changing Taste
Of changing Time leaves half your Work a Waste!
My Childhood fled your Couplet's clarion tone,
And sought for Homer in the Prose of Bohn.
Still through the Dust of that dim Prose appears
The Flight of Arrows and the Sheen of Spears;
Still we may trace what Hearts heroic feel,
And hear the Bronze that hurtles on the Steel!
But, ah, your Iliad seems a half-pretence,
Where Wits, not Heroes, prove their Skill in Fence,

And great Achilles' Eloquence doth show
As if no Centaur trained him, but Boileau!

Again, your Verse is orderly, — and more, —
“The Waves behind impel the Waves before;”
Monotonously musical they glide,
Till Couplet unto Couplet hath replied.
But turn to Homer! How his Verses sweep!
Surge answers Surge and Deep doth call on Deep;
This Line in Foam and Thunder issues forth,
Spurred by the West or smitten by the North,
Sombre in all its sullen Deeps, and all
Clear at the Crest, and foaming to the Fall,
The next with silver Murmur dies away,
Like Tides that falter to Calypso's Bay!

Thus Time, with sordid Alchemy and dread,
Turns half the Glory of your Gold to Lead;
Thus Time, — at Ronsard's wreath that vainly bit, —
Has marred the Poet to preserve the Wit,
Whose Knife cut cleanest with a poisoned pain, —
Who almost left on Addison a stain,
Yet Thou (strange Fate that clings to all of Thine!)
When most a Wit dost most a Poet shine.
In Poetry thy Dunciad expires,
When Wit has shot “her momentary Fires.”
'Tis Tragedy that watches by the Bed
“Where tawdry Yellow strove with dirty Red,”
And Men, remembering all, can scarce deny
To lay the Laurel where thine Ashes lie!

II

TO LORD BYRON

MY LORD,

(Do you remember how Leigh Hunt
Enraged you once by writing *My dear Byron*?)

Books have their fates,—as mortals have who punt,
And *yours* have entered on an age of iron.

Critics there be who think your satire blunt,
Your pathos, fudge; such perils must environ
Poets who in their time were quite the rage,
Though now there's not a soul to turn their page.

Yes, there is much dispute about your worth,
And much is said which you might like to know
By modern poets here upon the earth,

Where poets live, and love each other so;
And, in Elysium, it may move your mirth

To hear of bards that pitch your praises low,
Though there be some that for your credit stickle,
As — Glorious Mat, — and not inglorious Nichol.

(This kind of writing is my pet aversion,

I hate the slang, I hate the personalities,
I loathe the aimless, reckless, loose dispersion,
Of every rhyme that in the singer's wallet is,
I hate it as you hated the *Excursion*,

But, while no man a hero to his valet is,
The hero's still the model; I indite
The kind of rhymes that Byron oft would write.)

There's a Swiss critic whom I cannot rhyme to,
One Scherer, dry as sawdust, grim and prim.
Of him there's much to say, if I had time to
Concern myself in any wise with *him*.
He seems to hate the heights he cannot climb to,
He thinks your poetry a coxcomb's whim,
A good deal of his sawdust he has spilt on
Shakespeare, and Molière, and you, and Milton.

Ay, much his temper is like Vivien's mood,
Which found not Galahad pure, nor Lancelot brave;
Cold as a hailstorm on an April wood,
He buries poets in an icy grave,
His Essays — he of the Genevan hood!
Nothing so fine, but better doth he crave.
So stupid and so solemn in his spite
He dares to print that Molière could not write!

Enough of these excursions; I was saying
That half our English Bards are turned Reviewers,
And Arnold was discussing and assaying
The weight and value of that work of yours,
Examining and testing it and weighing,
And proved, the gems are pure, the gold endures.
While Swinburne cries with an exceeding joy,
The stones are paste, and half the gold, alloy.

In Byron, Arnold finds the greatest force,
Poetic, in this later age of ours;
His song, a torrent from a mountain source,
Clear as the crystal, singing with the showers,

Sweeps to the sea in unrestricted course
Through banks o'erhung with rocks and sweet with
flowers;

None of your brooks that modestly meander,
But swift as Awe along the Pass of Brander.

And when our century has clomb its crest,
And backward gazes o'er the plains of Time,
And counts its harvest, yours is still the best,
The richest garner in the field of rhyme
(The metaphoric mixture, 'tis confest,
Is all my own, and is not quite sublime).
But fame's not yours alone; you must divide all
The plums and pudding with the Bard of Rydal!

WORDSWORTH and BYRON, these the lordly names
And these the gods to whom most incense burns.
"Absurd!" cries Swinburne, and in anger flames,
And in an Æschylean fury spurns
With impious foot your altar, and exclaims
And wreathes his laurels on the golden urns
Where Coleridge's and Shelley's ashes lie,
Deaf to the din and heedless of the cry.

For Byron (Swinburne shouts) has never woven
One honest thread of life within his song;
As Offenbach is to divine Beethoven
So Byron is to Shelley (*This* is strong!),
And on Parnassus' peak, divinely cloven,
He may not stand, or stands by cruel wrong;
For Byron's rank (the examiner has reckoned)
Is in the third class or a feeble second.

"A Bernesque poet" at the very most,
And "never earnest save in politics,"
The Pegasus that he was wont to boast
A blundering, floundering hackney, full of tricks,
A beast that must be driven to the post
By whips and spurs and oaths and kicks and sticks,
A gasping, ranting, broken-winded brute,
That any judge of Pegasi would shoot;

In sooth, a half-bred Pegasus, and far gone
In spavin, curb, and half a hundred woes.
And Byron's style is "jolter-headed jargon;"
His verse is "only bearable in prose."
So living poets write of those that *are* gone,
And o'er the Eagle thus the Bantam crows;
And Swinburne ends where Verisopht began,
By owning you "a very clever man."

Or rather does not end: he still must utter
A quantity of the unkindest things.
Ah! were you here, I marvel, would you flutter
O'er such a foe the tempest of your wings?
'Tis "rant and cant and glare and splash and splutter"
That rend the modest air when Byron sings.
There Swinburne stops: a critic rather fiery.
Animis cælestibus tantæne iræ?

But whether he or Arnold in the right is,
Long is the argument, the quarrel long;
Non nobis est to settle *tantas lites*;
No poet I, to judge of right or wrong:
But of all things I always think a fight is

The *most* unpleasant in the lists of song ;
When Marsyas of old was flayed, Apollo
Set an example which we need not follow.

The fashion changes ! Maidens do not wear,
As once they wore, in necklaces and lockets
A curl ambrosial of Lord Byron's hair ;

"Don Juan" is not always in our pockets —
Nay, a New Writer's readers do not care

Much for your verse, but are inclined to mock its
Manners and morals. Ay, and most young ladies
To yours prefer the "Epic" called "of Hades !"

I do not blame them ; I'm inclined to think

That with the reigning taste 'tis vain to quarrel,
And Burns might teach his votaries to drink,

And Byron never meant to make them moral.

You yet have lovers true, who will not shrink

From lauding you and giving you the laurel ;
The Germans too, those men of blood and iron,
Of all our poets chiefly swear by Byron.

Farewell, thou Titan fairer than the Gods !

Farewell, farewell, thou swift and lovely spirit,

Thou splendid warrior with the world at odds,

Unpraised, unpraisable, beyond thy merit ;

Chased, like Orestes, by the Furies' rods,

Like him at length thy peace dost thou inherit !

Beholding whom, men think how fairer far

Than all the steadfast stars the wandering star !¹

¹ Mr. Swinburne's and Mr. Arnold's diverse views of Byron will be found in the *Selections* by Mr. Arnold and in the *Nineteenth Century*.

III

TO OMAR KHAYYĀM

WISE Omar, do the Southern Breezes fling
Above your Grave, at ending of the Spring,
The Snowdrift of the Petals of the Rose,
The wild white Roses you were wont to sing?

Far in the South I know a Land divine,¹
And there is many a Saint and many a Shrine,
And over all the Shrines the Blossom blows
Of Roses that were dear to you as Wine.

You were a Saint of unbelieving Days,
Liking your Life and happy in Men's Praise;
Enough for you the Shade beneath the Bough,
Enough to watch the wild World go its Ways.

Dreadless and hopeless thou of Heaven or Hell,
Careless of Words thou hadst not Skill to spell,
Content to know not all thou knowest now,
What's Death? Doth any Pitcher dread the Well?

The Pitchers we, whose Maker makes them ill,
Shall He torment them if they chance to spill?
Nay, like the broken Potsherds are we cast
Forth and forgotten, — and what will be will!

¹ The hills above San Remo, where rose-bushes are planted by the shrines. Omar desired that his grave might be where the wind would scatter rose-leaves over it.

So still were we, before the Months began
That rounded us and shaped us into Man.

So still we *shall* be, surely, at the last,
Dreamless, untouched of Blessing or of Ban !

Ah, strange it seems that this thy common Thought —
How all Things have been, ay, and shall be nought —

Was ancient Wisdom in thine ancient East,
In those old Days when Senlac Fight was fought,

Which gave our England for a captive Land
To pious Chiefs of a believing Band,

A gift to the Believer from the Priest,
Tossed from the holy to the blood-red Hand !¹

Yea, thou wert singing when that Arrow clave
Through Helm and Brain of him who could not save

His England, even of Harold Godwin's son ;
The high Tide murmurs by the Hero's Grave !²

And *thou* wert wreathing Roses — who can tell ? —
Or chanting for some Girl that pleased thee well,

Or satst at Wine in Nashâpûr, when dun
The twilight veiled the Field where Harold fell !

The salt Sea-waves above him rage and roam !
Along the white Walls of his guarded Home

No Zephyr stirs the Rose, but o'er the Wave
The wild Wind beats the Breakers into Foam !

¹ Omar was contemporary with the battle of Hastings.

² *Per mandata Ducis, Rex hic, Heralde, quiescis,
Ut custos maneat littoris et pelagi.*

And dear to him, as Roses were to thee,
Rings the long Roar of Onset of the Sea;
The *Swan's Path* of his Fathers is his Grave:
His Sleep, methinks, is sound as thine can be.

His was the Age of Faith, when all the West
Looked to the Priest for Torment or for Rest;
And thou wert living then, and didst not heed
The Saint who banned thee or the Saint who blessed!

Ages of Progress! These eight hundred Years
Hath Europe shuddered with her Hopes or Fears,
And now! to thee she listeneth indeed, —
To *thee*, and half believeth what she hears!

Hadst *thou* THE SECRET? Ah, and who may tell?
"An Hour we have," thou saidst; "Ah, waste it well!"
An Hour we have, and yet Eternity
Looms o'er us, and the Thought of Heaven or Hell!

Nay, we can never be as wise as thou,
O idle Singer 'neath the blossomed Bough.
Nay, and we cannot be content to die.
We cannot shirk the Questions "Where?" and "How?"

Ah, not from learned Peace and gay Content
Shall we of England go the way *he* went —
The Singer of the Red Wine and the Rose —
Nay, otherwise than *his* our Day is spent!

Serene he dwelt in fragrant Nashâpûr,
But we must wander while the Stars endure.
He knew THE SECRET: we have none that knows,
No Man so sure as Omar once was sure!



RHYMES OLD AND NEW



TO E. M. S.

Primâ dicta mihi, summâ dicenda Camenâ.

THE years will pass, and hearts will range,
You conquer Time, and Care, and Change.
Though Time doth still delight to shed
The dust on many a younger head;
Though Care, oft coming, hath the guile
From younger lips to steal the smile;
Though Change makes younger hearts wax cold,
And sells new loves for loves of old,
Time, Change, nor Care, hath learned the art
To fleck your hair, to chill your heart,
To touch your tresses with the snow,
To mar your mirth of long ago.
Change, Care, nor Time, while life endure,
Shall spoil our ancient friendship sure,
The love which flows from sacred springs,
In "old unhappy far-off things,"
From sympathies in grief and joy,
Through all the years of man and boy.

Therefore, to you, the rhymes I strung
When even this "brindled" head was young
I bring, and later rhymes I bring
That flit upon as weak a wing,
But still for you, for yours, they sing !

A SCOT TO JEANNE D'ARC

DARK Lily without blame,
Not upon us the shame,
Whose sires were to the Auld Alliance true,
They, by the Maiden's side,
Victorious fought and died,
One stood by thee that fiery torment through,
Till the White Dove from thy pure lips had passed,
And thou wert with thine own St. Catherine at the last.

Once only didst thou see
In artist's imagery,
Thine own face painted, and that precious thing
Was in an Archer's hand
From the leal Northern land.
Alas, what price would not thy people bring
To win that portrait of the ruinous
Gulf of devouring years that hide the Maid from us !

Born of a lowly line,
Noteless as once was thine,
One of that name I would were kin to me,
Who, in the Scottish Guard
Won this for his reward,
To fight for France, and memory of thee :
Not upon us, dark Lily without blame,
Not on the North may fall the shadow of that shame.

On France and England both
The shame of broken troth,
Of coward hate and treason black must be ;

If England slew thee, France
Sent not one word, one lance,
One coin to rescue or to ransom thee.
And still thy Church unto the Maid denies
The halo and the palms, the Beatific prize.

But yet thy people calls
Within the rescued walls
Of Orleans ; and makes its prayer to thee ;
What though the Church have chidden
These orisons forbidden,
Yet art thou with this earth's immortal Three,
With him in Athens that of hemlock died,
And with thy Master dear whom the world crucified.

SEEKERS FOR A CITY

"Believe me, if that blissful, that beautiful place, were set on a hill visible to all the world, I should long ago have journeyed thither. . . . But the number and variety of the ways! For you know, *There is but one road that leads to Corinth.*"

HERMOTIMUS (Mr. Pater's Version).

"The Poet says, *dear city of Cecrops*, and wilt thou not say, *dear city of Zeus?*"

M. ANTONINUS.

To *Corinth leads one road*, you say:
Is there a Corinth, or a way?
Each bland or blatant preacher hath
His painful or his primrose path,
And not a soul of all of these
But knows the city 'twixt the seas,
Her fair unnumbered homes and all
Her gleaming amethystine wall!

Blind are the guides who know the way,
The guides who write, and preach, and pray,
I watch their lives, and I divine
They differ not from yours and mine!

One man we knew, and only one,
Whose seeking for a city's done,
For what he greatly sought he found,
A city girt with fire around,
A city in an empty land
Between the wastes of sky and sand,

A city on a river-side,
Where by the folk he loved, he died.¹

Alas! it is not ours to tread
That path wherein his life he led,
Not ours his heart to dare and feel,
Keen as the fragrant Syrian steel;
Yet are we not quite city-less,
Not wholly left in our distress —
Is it not said by One of old,

Sheep have I of another fold?
Ah! faint of heart, and weak of will,
For us there is a city still!
Dear city of Zeus, the Stoic says,²
The Voice from Rome's imperial days,
In Thee meet all things, and disperse,
In Thee, for Thee, O Universe!
To me all's fruit thy seasons bring,
Alike thy summer and thy spring;
The winds that wail, the suns that burn,
From Thee proceed, to Thee return.

Dear city of Zeus, shall we not say,
Home to which none can lose the way!
Born in that city's flaming bound,
We do not find her, but are found.
Within her wide and viewless wall
The Universe is girdled all.

¹ January 26, 1885.

² M. Antoninus, iv. 23.

All joys and pains, all wealth and dearth,
All things that travail on the earth,
God's will they work, if God there be,
If not, what is my life to me ?

Seek we no further, but abide
Within this city great and wide,
In her and for her living, we
Have no less joy than to be free;
Nor death nor grief can quite appal
The folk that dwell within her wall,
Nor aught but with our will befall

TO RHODOCLEIA

ON HER MELANCHOLY SINGING

(Rhodocleia was beloved by Rufinus, one of the late poets of the Greek Anthology.)

STILL, Rhodocleia, brooding on the dead,
Still singing of the meads of asphodel,
Lands desolate of delight?
Say, hast thou dreamed of, or remembered,
The shores where shadows dwell,
Nor know the sun, nor see the stars of night?

There, 'midst thy music, doth thy spirit gaze
As a girl pines for home,
Looking along the way that she hath come,
Sick to return, and counts the weary days!
So wouldst thou flee
Back to the multitude whose days are done,
Wouldst taste the fruit that lured Persephone,
The sacrament of death; and die, and be
No more in the wind and sun!

Thou hast not dreamed it, but remembered!
I know thou hast been there,
Hast seen the stately dwellings of the dead
Rise in the twilight air,
And cross the shadowy bridge the spirits tread,
And climbed the golden stair!

Nay, by thou cloudy hair
And lips that were so fair,

Sad lips now mindful of some ancient smart,
And melancholy eyes, the haunt of Care,
I know thee who thou art!
That Rhodocleia, Glory of the Rose,
Of Hellas, ere her close,
That Rhodocleia who, when all was done
The golden time of Greece, and fallen her sun,
Swayed her last poet's heart.

With roses did he woo thee, and with song,
With thine own rose, and with the lily sweet,
The dark-eyed violet,
Garlands of wind-flowers wet,
And fragrant love-lamps that the whole night long
Burned till the dawn was burning in the skies,
Praising *thy golden eyes,*
And feet more silvery than Thetis' feet!

But thou didst die and flit
Among the tribes outworn,
The unavailing myriads of the past:
Oft he beheld thy face in dreams of morn,
And, waking, wept for it,
Till his own time came at last,
And then he sought thee in the dusky land!
Wide are the populous places of the dead
Where souls on earth once wed
May never meet, nor each take other's hand,
Each far from the other fled!

So all in vain he sought for thee, but thou
Didst never taste of the Lethæan stream,

Nor that forgetful fruit,
The mystic pom'granate;
But from the Mighty Warden fledst; and now,
The fugitive of Fate,
Thou farest in our life as in a dream,
Still wandering with thy lute,
Like that sweet paynim lady of old song,
Who sang and wandered long,
For love of her Aucassin, seeking him!
So with thy minstrelsy
Thou roamest, dreaming of the country dim,
Below the veiled sky!

There doth thy lover dwell,
Singing, and seeking still to find thy face
In that forgetful place:
Thou shalt not meet him here,
Not till thy singing clear
Through all the murmur of the streams of hell
Wins to the Maiden's ear!
May she, perchance, have pity on thee and call
Thine eager spirit to sit beside her feet,
Passing throughout the long unechoing hall
Up to the shadowy throne,
Where the lost lovers of the ages meet;
Till then thou art alone!

ANOTHER WAY

COME to me in my dreams, and then,
One saith, *I shall be well again,*
For then the night will more than pay
The hopeless longing of the day.

Nay, come not *thou* in dreams, my sweet,
With shadowy robes, and silent feet,
And with the voice, and with the eyes
That greet me in a soft surprise.

Last night, last night, in dreams we met,
And how, to-day, shall I forget,
Or how, remembering, restrain
Mine incommunicable pain?

Nay, where thy land and people are,
Dwell thou remote, apart, afar,
Nor mingle with the shapes that sweep
The melancholy ways of Sleep.

But if, perchance, the shadows break,
If dreams depart, and men awake,
If face to face at length we see,
Be thine the voice to welcome me.

CLEVEDON CHURCH

IN MEMORIAM

H. B.

WESTWARD I watch the low green hills of Wales,
The low sky silver grey,
The turbid Channel with the wandering sails
Moans through the winter day.
There is no colour but one ashen light
On tower and lonely tree,
The little church upon the windy height
Is grey as sky or sea.
But there hath he that woke the sleepless Love
Slept through these fifty years,
There is the grave that has been wept above
With more than mortal tears.
And far below I hear the Channel sweep
And all his waves complain,
As Hallam's dirge through all the years must keep
Its monotone of pain.

* * * * *

Grey sky, brown waters, as a bird that flies,
My heart flits forth from these
Back to the winter rose of northern skies,
Back to the northern seas.
And lo, the long waves of the ocean beat
Below the minster grey,
Caverns and chapels worn of saintly feet,
And knees of them that pray.

And I remember me how twain were one
Beside that ocean dim,
I count the years passed over since the sun
That lights me looked on him,
And dreaming of the voice that, save in sleep,
Shall greet me not again,
Far, far below I hear the Channel sweep
And all his waves complain.

MARTIAL IN TOWN

LAST night, within the stifling train,
Lit by the foggy lamp o'erhead,
Sick of the sad Last News, I read
Verse of that joyous child of Spain,

Who dwelt when Rome was waxing cold,
Within the Roman din and smoke.
And like my heart to me they spoke,
These accents of his heart of old:—

*Brother, had we but time to live,
And fleet the careless hours together,
With all that leisure has to give
Of perfect life and peaceful weather,*

*The Rich Man's balls, the anxious faces,
The weary Forum, courts, and cases
Should know us not; but quiet nooks,
But summer shade by field and well,
But country rides, and talk of books,
At home, with these, we fain would dwell!*

*Now neither lives, but day by day
Sees the suns wasting in the west,
And feels their flight, and doth delay
To lead the life he loveth best.*

So from thy city prison broke,
Martial, thy wail for life misspent,
And so, through London's noise and smoke
My heart replies to the lament.

For dear as Tagus with his gold,
And swifter Salo, were to thee,
So dear to me the woods that fold
The streams that circle Fernielea!

SCYTHE SONG

MOWERS, weary and brown, and blithe,
What is the word methinks ye know,
Endless over-word that the Scythe
Sings to the blades of the grass below?
Scythes that swing in the grass and clover,
Something, still, they say as they pass;
What is the word that, over and over,
Sings the Scythe to the flowers and grass?

*Hush, ah hush, the Scythes are saying,
Hush, and heed not, and fall asleep ;
Hush, they say to the grasses swaying,
Hush, they sing to the clover deep !
Hush — 'tis the lullaby Time is singing —
Hush, and heed not, for all things pass,
Hush, ah hush ! and the Scythes are swinging
Over the clover, over the grass !*

THE SONG OF ORPHEUS

FROM THE ORPHIC ARGONAUTICA

SLEEP! king of gods and men!
Come to my call again,
Swift over field and fen,
Mountain and deep :
Come, bid the waves be still ;
Sleep, streams on height and hill ;
Beasts, birds, and snakes, thy will
Conquereth, Sleep !
Come on thy golden wings,
Come ere the swallow sings,
Lulling all living things,
Fly they or creep !
Come with thy leaden wand,
Come with thy kindly hand,
Soothing on sea or land
Mortals that weep.
Come from the cloudy west,
Soft over brain and breast,
Bidding the Dragon rest,
Come to me, Sleep !

FROM OMAR KHAYYÁM

RHYMED FROM THE PROSE VERSION OF
MR. JUSTIN HUNTLY MCCARTHY

THE Paradise they bid us fast to win
Hath Wine and Women; is it then a sin
To live as we shall live in Paradise,
And make a Heaven of Earth, ere Heaven begin?

The wise may search the world from end to end,
From dusty nook to dusty nook, my friend,
And nothing better find than girls and wine,
Of all the things they neither make nor mend.

Nay, listen thou who, walking on Life's way,
Hast seen no lovelock of thy love's grow grey
Listen, and love thy life, and let the Wheel
Of Heaven go spinning its own wilful way.

Man is a flagon, and his soul the wine,
Man is a lamp, wherein the Soul doth shine,
Man is a shaken reed, wherein that wind,
The Soul, doth ever rustle and repine.

Each morn I say, to-night I will repent,
Repent! and each night go the way I went —
The way of Wine; but now that reigns the rose,
Lord of Repentance, rage not, but relent.

I wish to drink of wine — so deep, so deep —
The scent of wine my sepulchre shall steep,

And they, the revellers by Omar's tomb,
Shall breathe it, and in Wine shall fall asleep.

Before the rent walls of a ruined town
Lay the King's skull, whereby a bird flew down
"And where," he sang, "is all thy clash of arms?
Where the sonorous trumps of thy renown?"

LES ROSES DE SÂDI

THIS morning I vowed I would bring thee my Roses,
They were thrust in the band that my bodice encloses,
But the breast-knots were broken, the Roses went free.

The breast-knots were broken; the Roses together
Floated forth on the wings of the wind and the weather,
And they drifted afar down the streams of the sea.

And the sea was as red as when sunset uncloses,
But my raiment is sweet from the scent of the Roses,
Thou shalt know, Love, how fragrant a memory can be.

THE HAUNTED TOWER

SUGGESTED BY A POEM OF
THÉOPHILE GAUTIER

I N front he saw the donjon tall
Deep in the woods, and stayed to scan
The guards that slept along the wall,
Or dozed upon the bartizan.
He marked the drowsy flag that hung
Unwaved by wind, unfrayed by shower,
He listened to the birds that sung
Go forth and win the haunted tower !
The tangled brake made way for him,
The twisted brambles bent aside ;
And lo, he pierced the forest dim,
And lo, he won the fairy bride !
For *he* was young, but ah ! we find,
All we, whose beards are flecked with grey,
Our fairy castle's far behind,
We watch it from the darkling way :
'Twas ours, that palace, in our youth,
We revelled there in happy cheer :
Who scarce dare visit now in sooth,
Le Vieux Château de Souvenir !
For not the boughs of forest green
Begird that castle far away,
There is a mist where we have been
That weeps about it, cold and grey,
And if we seek to travel back
'Tis through a thicket dim and sere,

With many a grave beside the track,
And many a haunting form of fear.
Dead leaves are wet among the moss,
With weed and thistle overgrown—
A ruined barge within the fosse,
A castle built of crumbling stone !
The drawbridge drops from rusty chains,
There comes no challenge from the hold ;
No squire, nor dame, nor knight remains,
Of all who dwelt with us of old.
And there is silence in the hall
No sound of songs, no ray of fire ;
But gloom where all was glad, and all
Is darkened with a vain desire.
And every picture's fading fast,
Of fair Jehanne, or Cydalise.
Lo, the white shadows hurrying past,
Below the boughs of dripping trees !

.
Ah, rise, and march, and look not back,
Now the long way has brought us here ;
We may not turn and seek the track
To the old Château de Souvenir !

BOAT-SONG

A DRIFT, with starlit skies above,
With starlit seas below,
We move with all the suns that move,
With all the seas that flow :
For, bond or free, earth, sky, and sea,
Wheel with one central will,
And thy heart drifteth on to me,
And only Time stands still.

Between two shores of death we drift,
Behind are things forgot,
Before, the tide is racing swift
To shores man knoweth not.
Above, the sky is far and cold,
Below, the moaning sea
Sweeps o'er the loves that were of old,
But thou, Love, love thou me.

Ah, lonely are the ocean ways,
And dangerous the deep,
And frail the fairy barque that strays
Above the seas asleep.
Ah, toil no more with helm or oar,
We drift, or bond or free,
On yon far shore the breakers roar,
But thou, Love, love thou me !

LOST LOVE

WHO wins his Love shall lose her,
Who loses her shall gain,
For still the spirit woos her,
A soul without a stain;
And Memory still pursues her
With longings not in vain!

He loses her who gains her,
Who watches day by day
The dust of time that stains her,
The griefs that leave her grey,
The flesh that yet enchains her
Whose grace hath passed away!

Oh, happier he who gains not
The Love some seem to gain:
The joy that custom stains not
Shall still with him remain,
The loveliness that wanes not,
The Love that ne'er can wane.

In dreams she grows not older
The lands of Dream among,
Though all the world wax colder,
Though all the songs be sung,
In dreams doth he behold her
Still fair and kind and young.

THE PROMISE OF HELEN

WHOM hast thou longed for most,
True love of mine?
Whom hast thou loved and lost?
Lo, she is thine!

She that another wed
Breaks from her vow;
She that hath long been dead
Wakes for thee now.

Dreams haunt the hapless bed,
Ghosts haunt the night,
Life crowns her living head,
Love and Delight.

Nay, not a dream nor ghost,
Nay, but Divine,
She that was loved and lost
Waits to be thine!

ON CALAIS SANDS

ON Calais Sands the grey began,
Then rosy red above the grey,
The morn with many a scarlet van
Leap'd, and the world was glad with May!
The little waves along the bay
Broke white upon the shelving strands;
The sea-mews flitted white as they
On Calais Sands!

On Calais Sands must man with man
Wash honour clean in blood to-day;
On spaces wet from waters wan
How white the flashing rapiers play,
Parry, riposte! and lunge! The fray
Shifts for a while, then mournful stands
The Victor: life ebbs fast away
On Calais Sands!

On Calais Sands a little space
Of silence, then the splash and spray,
The sound of eager waves than ran
To kiss the perfumed locks astray,
To touch these lips that ne'er said "Nay,"
To dally with the helpless hands;
Till the deep sea in silence lay
On Calais Sands!

Between the lilac and the may
She waits her love from alien lands;
Her love is colder than the clay
On Calais Sands!

POSCIMUR

FROM HORACE

HUSH, for they call! If in the shade,
My lute, we twain have idly strayed,
And song for many a season made,
Once more reply;
Once more we'll play as we have played,
My lute and I!

Roman the song: the strain you know,
The Lesbian wrought it long ago.
Now singing as he charged the foe,
Now in the bay,
Where safe in the shore-water's flow
His galleys lay.

So sang he Bacchus and the Nine,
And Venus and her boy divine,
And Lycus of the dusky eyne,
The dusky hair;
So shalt thou sing, ah, Lute of mine,
Of all things fair;

Apollo's glory! Sounding shell,
Thou lute, to Jove desirable,
When soft thine accents sigh and swell
At festival —
Delight more dear than words can tell,
Attend my call!

ON THE GARLAND SENT TO
RHODOCLEIA

RUFINUS

GOLDEN EYES

“**A**H, Golden Eyes, to win you yet,
I bring mine April coronet,
The lovely blossoms of the spring,
For you I weave, to you I bring
These roses with the lilies set,
The dewy dark-eyed violet,
Narcissus, and the wind-flower wet:
Wilt thou disdain mine offering?

Ah, Golden Eyes!

“Crowned with thy lover’s flowers, forget
The pride wherein thy heart is set,
For thou, like these or anything,
Hast but a moment of thy spring,
Thy spring, and then — the long regret!

Ah, Golden Eyes!”

A GALLOWAY GARLAND

WE know not, on these hills of ours,
The fabled asphodel of Greece,
That filleth with immortal flowers
Fields where the heroes are at peace!
Not ours are myrtle buds like these
That breathe o'er isles where memories dwell
Of Sappho, in enchanted seas!

We meet not, on our upland moor,
The singing Maid of Helicon,
You may not hear her music pure
Float on the mountain meres withdrawn;
The Muse of Greece, the Muse is gone!
But we have songs that please us well
And flowers we love to look upon.

More sweet than Southern myrtles far
The bruised Marsh-myrtle breatheth keen;
Parnassus names the flower, the star,
That shines among the well-heads green
The bright Marsh-asphodels between —
Marsh-myrtle and Marsh-asphodel
May crown the Northern Muse a queen.

ZIMBABWE

(The ruined Gold Cities of Rhodesia. The Ophir of Scripture.)

INTO the darkness whence they came,
They passed, their country knoweth none,
They and their gods without a name
Partake the same oblivion.
Their work they did, their work is done,
Whose gold, it may be, shone like fire
About the brows of Solomon,
And in the House of God's Desire.

Hence came the altar all of gold,
The hinges of the Holy Place,
The censer with the fragrance rolled
Skyward to seek Jehovah's face;
The golden Ark that did encase
The Law within Jerusalem,
The lilies and the rings to grace
The High Priest's robe and diadem.

The pestilence, the desert spear,
Smote them; they passed, with none to tell
The names of them who laboured here:
Stark walls and crumbling crucible,
Strait gates, and graves, and ruined well,
Abide, dumb monuments of old,
We know but that men fought and fell,
Like us, like us, for love of Gold.

TUSITALA

WE spoke of a rest in a fairy knowe of the North,
but he,

Far from the firths of the East, and the racing tides
of the West,

Sleeps in the sight and the sound of the infinite South-
ern Sea,

Weary and well content in his grave on the Vaëa
crest.

Tusitala, the lover of children, the teller of tales,

Giver of counsel and dreams, a wonder, a world's
delight,

Looks o'er the labours of men in the plain and the hill;
and the sails

Pass and repass on the sea that he loved, in the day
and the night.

Winds of the West and the East in the rainy season
blow

Heavy with perfume, and all his fragrant woods are
wet,

Winds of the East and West as they wander to and for,

Bear him the love of the land he loved, and the long
regret.

Once we were kindest, he said, when leagues of the
limitless sea

Flowed between us, but now that no wash of the
wandering tides

Sunders us each from each, yet nearer we seem to be,

Whom only the unbridged stream of the river of
Death divides.

VALE

ONCE the Muse was fair,
Once : when we were young,
Gay and debonair,
Or with pensive air,
So she came, she sung.

Often, through the noise
Of the running stream,
Would we hear her voice,
Hear it and rejoice,
“ Dream not ’twas a dream.”

Could we see her now
Come at a command,
Withered on her brow
Were the wreath, the bough
Broken in her hand.

Nay, as erst the Morn
Floating far away,
More in ruth than scorn
Left her love outworn,
Once his locks were grey,

So, for ever young,
Ever fair, the Muse
Leaves us, who have sung
Till the lute’s unstrung,
Doth her grace refuse.

'Tis not she, but we,
That are weary now ;
Well, howe'er it be,
Her we shall not see,
Broken is the bough.



NOTES

TO THE READER. — From Mr. Lang's *Ballades and Verses Vain* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1884), which Mr. Dobson prepared for American readers.

A BALLADE OF XXII BALLADES. — Sir Frederick Pollock reviewed the first edition of Mr. Lang's *XXII Ballades in Blue China* in the *St. James' Gazette*, 3rd July, 1880, in which review this ballade appeared. Mr. Lang was so pleased with the lines that he asked to have them prefixed to his next edition, and they accordingly adorn the *third* and every subsequent issue.

DIZAIN. — Specially written for *XXII Ballades in Blue China*, where it still remains notwithstanding its incorporation in Mr. Dobson's *Collected Poems*.

RONSARD'S GRAVE. — This version ventures to condense the original which, like most of the works of the Pleiad, is unnecessarily long.

The snow, and wind, and hail. Ronsard's rendering of the famous passage in *Odyssey*, vi., about the dwellings of the Olympians. The vision of a Paradise of learned lovers and poets constantly recurs in the poetry of Joachim du Bellay, and of Ronsard.

See also *Songs and Sonnets of Pierre de Ronsard . . . Selected and Translated into English Verse by Curtis Hidden Page*, (Boston, 1903.)

ROMANCE. — Suggested by a passage in *La Faustin*, by M. E. de Goncourt, a curious moment of poetry in a repulsive piece of *naturalisme*.

THREE LETTERS TO DEAD AUTHORS.—These three letters in verse have heretofore been accessible only in *Letters to Dead Authors* (1886 and later reissues), of which a delightful pocket edition entitled *New and Old Letters to Dead Authors*, (London, 1907,) is now to be had for two shillings net—in England!

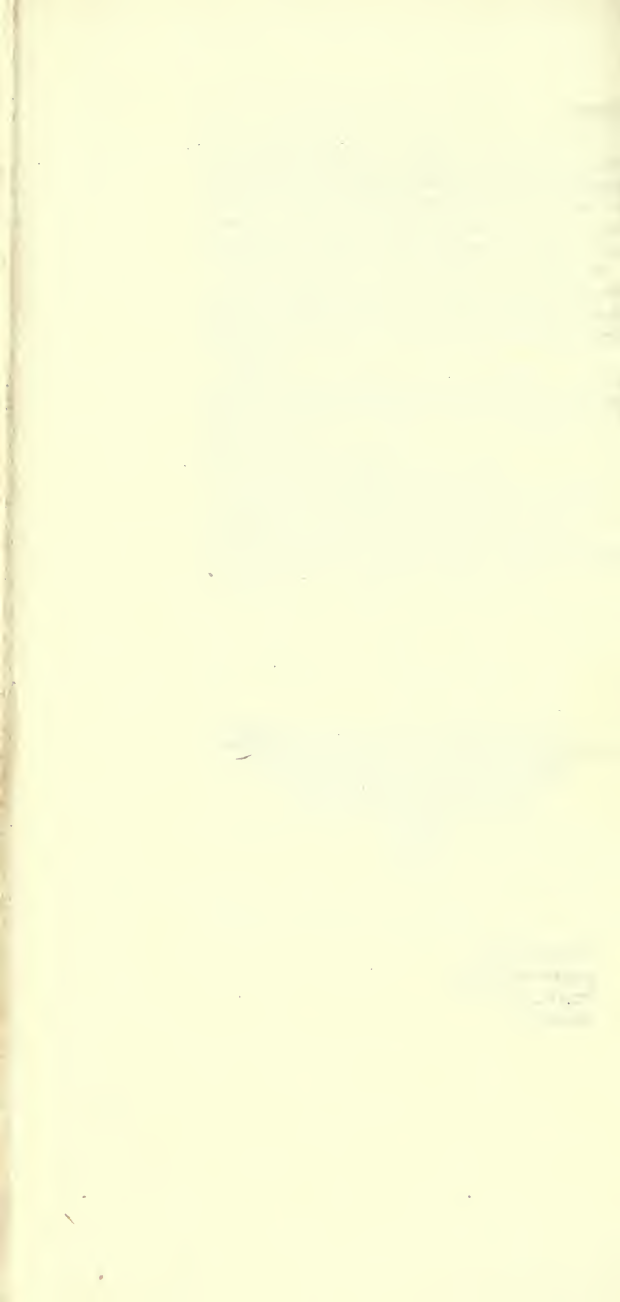
The first edition of *Letters to Dead Authors* was published in March, 1886; in the second edition later in the same year stanzas 4 and 5 of the Byron letter were cancelled.

These are restored in all later editions. A new *Envoy*, however, was added at the end of the second edition which fails to appear in any later reissue. It is as follows:

Go, Letters to the irresponsible Ghosts,
That scarce will heed them less than living Men.
For now new Books come thicker than on Coasts
And meads of Asia, throng the sea-birds when
The snow-wind drives them South in clamorous Hosts
From their salt marshes by Cayster's Fen.




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